

Quick ways to improve your resume

By Jenny Lloyd

There's no doubt that jobseekers are creating better resumes than ever before. But, while most of us are au fait with resume etiquette, there are still one or two bad habits that can creep into our style and content from the get-go.

“The number one way to improve your resume is to tailor it to the job you’re applying for,” says Steve Walton, chief psychologist at Hallis Recruitment. “It’s a simple improvement, but accentuating relevant skills or experiences communicates a high level of interest and encourages a positive perception.”

Indeed, when it comes to resumes, the old adage that it takes less than 30 seconds to make an impression rings true. Many jobseekers unwittingly sabotage their chances of success by failing to recognise that their resume is their best tool for selling their talents.

But this doesn't mean you have to spend hours on a total overhaul to make a difference. By following our quick and easy tips, you can improve the marketability of your resume within a matter of minutes.

Rewrite it

Rewrite your resume using a tone that’s enthusiastic, upbeat and professional. As a general rule, it’s better to be too professional than too casual; and clear, concise wording works best.

“You want to adjust the tone of your resume for the industry and environment you’re interviewing for,” says Walton. “For instance, a formal tone will win you points if you’re applying for a job at a law firm, but could work against you if you’re applying for a job at an ad agency.”

Banish bashfulness

If you want to get a bit more creative with your rewrite, then use action verbs and strong adjectives to accentuate your skills or work history. High impact words and phrases can give your credentials a boost and strengthen your achievements.

“Whether we like it or not, applying for jobs is a competition. And when it comes to resumes, whether or not you speak highly of yourself effects how an employer perceives your potential against other candidates,” says Walton.

Embrace convention

If you want to take revising your resume a step further, brevity will open doors, and clear formatting is a must. But bear in mind that coloured paper, ‘creative’ fonts or clip art will distract the interviewer from your talents, and may even trigger an outright rejection.

“Employers may have to sift through a large number of [job applications](#) in a short space of time, so in order to get noticed you need to make sure that you pay attention to correct resume format and business etiquette,” says Walton. For this, he recommends applying a standard structure (e.g. chronological, functional, or combination), using no more than two conventional fonts, using consistent alignment techniques, and leaving at least two lines between each section.

Use a fine tooth comb

If all that sounds a little too complicated for your liking, a simpler option is to double-check your grammar and spelling, which Walton recommends for establishing a minimal rapport with the employer. Keeping sentences short and simple, organising paragraphs, and using short, direct sub-headings can also work wonders.

Cut through the clutter

Finally, don’t forget that keeping it simple is a key component of resume success – so set a two-page limit and stick to it.

“Long-winded resumes only increase the chances of your talents being overlooked,” says Walton. “Ultimately it’s presenting your skills and abilities clearly, confidently and succinctly that will increase the chances of your resume being read,” says Walton.

Published: 09 November 2007